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Mariana Regalado

Brooklyn College, regalado@brooklyn.cuny.edu

Jill Cirasella

CUNY Graduate Center, jcirasella@gc.cuny.edu

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Editorial: Shape Shifters: Librarians Evolve Yet Again in the Age of Google

Mariana Regalado
Reference Librarian
Brooklyn College Library
Brooklyn NY 11210-2889

Jill Cirasella
Reference Librarian
Brooklyn College Library
Brooklyn NY 11210-2889

Like all organisms and organizations, librarians and libraries evolve by adapting to changes and pressures in their environments. From scroll to codex to online text: every upgrade in technology is matched by an adaptation in librarianship. Nevertheless, despite centuries of evolution, the activities of librarians and the mission of libraries have remained essentially constant and are still recognizable.

The pace of change in libraries has been especially rapid since the introduction of computers, and an important recent change is the advent of the "age of Google." Heralded by the arrival in 1998 of the Google search engine, with its clean interface and superior results ranking, the age of Google is defined by the growth of Google beyond its basic search engine and the explosion of online tools that, like Google, delight users, deliver services quickly, and reflect and respond to user behavior.

As the tools of the age of Google have become integral to research and other activities, librarians have adapted in three key ways: using the tools, creating and improving library tools, and grappling with the social and pedagogical implications of the tools. This special issue invites readers to consider specific instances of these modes of adaptation.

The first group of articles examines how librarians have taken advantage of opportunities presented by age-of-Google tools to improve workflow and service. In "Have You Searched Google Yet? Using Google as a Discovery Tool for Cataloging," Jennifer Lang discusses how Google can be used effectively in library technical

services. Next, in "A Case Study of Using Google Analytics for Improving Library Website Content and Design," Wei Fang describes how Google Analytics can help librarians assess and improve library Web sites. Then, in "[You and Me and Google Makes Three: Welcoming Google into the Reference Interview](#)," Jill Cirasella demonstrates how various Google modules can be used to solve tricky reference questions.

The second group of articles shows how librarians adapt to the challenge of the age-of-Google service model, in which user expectations drive service. "[Library Resource Sharing in the Early Age of Google](#)" by Beth Posner and "[Library Delivery 2.0: Delivering Library Materials in the Age of NetFlix](#)" by Lori Ayre both explore the implications of age-of-Google tools for resource sharing and content delivery. Then, in "[What About the Book? Google-izing the Catalog with Tables of Contents](#)," Angi Faiks, Amy Radermacher, and Amy Sheehan assert that libraries can take cues from Google Book Search to improve users' experiences with online catalogs. Next, in "[Google 'til They Goggle](#)," Carol Ottolenghi describes how her library uses age-of-Google techniques such as alerts and RSS feeds to create a specialized library service. Finally, in "[Standing Up for Open Source](#)," Lee Jaffe and Greg Careaga argue that age-of-Google librarians are well positioned to embrace and promote open source projects.

The third group of articles explores how librarians are changing how they think about information literacy and authority in the age of Google. In "[Unclear on the Context: Refocusing on Information Literacy's Evaluative Component in the Age of Google](#)," Genevieve Williams posits that the age of Google provides an opportunity for librarians to foster deeper levels of information literacy. Then, in "[Research Authority in the Age of Google: Equilibrium Sought](#)," Mariana Regalado discusses how authority has been redefined for research in the age of Google. Regalado's argument is complemented by "[Digg.com and Socially-Driven Authority](#)," in which Steven Ovadia explores how age-of-Google news sites are organized according to a new kind of "social authority."

The special issue is brought to a charming close with an editorial called "[The View from an Elder](#)," in which JoEllen Broome recounts her professional maturation in the age of Google. Broome's story shows how librarians are imaginative and responsive shape shifters, not the mere shelf shifters we are sometimes portrayed as.

We welcome you to read, consider, and respond to the articles in this issue. But first, we wish to acknowledge our colleague Vicente Revilla of the Borough of Manhattan Community College, who invited us to participate in a panel discussion on "Is Google the Library of the Future?" This special issue sprang from our provocative discussions with Vicente and other colleagues, and was supported by research leave time from the Brooklyn College Library.